

## Orange County Natural Areas Inventory

### ENO RIVER DUKE FOREST MESIC SLOPES

Updated 2004

**Site Number:** E03

**Size:** 102 acres

**Site Significance:** County

**USGS Quadrangle:** Efland

**SIGNIFICANT FEATURES:** This site features an unbroken stretch of forest that extends almost two miles along the Eno River. Along with the adjacent McGowan Creek Preserve, it is the first large undeveloped tract that the river flows through just downstream from its headwaters. This area, along with the surrounding Duke Forest lands, forms the most significant wildlife reservoir upstream from Hillsborough. It is thus a very significant component of the wildlife corridor system along the Eno River. Two state-listed animals are present: the notched rainbow (*Villosa constricta*) and the Carolina darter (*Etheostoma collis*).

**NATURAL COMMUNITIES:** Dry-Mesic Oak—Hickory Forest

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION:** The east-facing slopes along the river are relatively undisturbed, whereas the west-facing slopes (on the opposite side of the river) have been partly clearcut and are now (2002) regenerating. Several small rock bluffs are present, some with stands of mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) beneath oaks, hickories, and red cedar. The forest is middle-aged mixed mesic hardwoods with some large trees. Common are tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), pignut hickory (*C. glabra*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*) and white oak (*Q. alba*). Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), ironwood (*Carpinus carolinianus*), and spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) are common beneath the canopy. In several rich pockets there are abundant spring wildflower displays. Upper slopes support a drier forest of oaks, hickories, beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), and scattered shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*).

Growing in a marshy spot along the east bank is a small population of golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*), which is unusual for this part of the Piedmont. A small population of wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*) was found in 2002 on the steep slope by the old quarry; it is only the second known population in NC away from the mountains (the other is on Occonechee Mountain).

This site offers good habitat for a number of interesting animals. Breeding birds include the red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), a regionally rare species typical of mature bottomlands, and the cedar waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), a species that commonly nests in the mountains but only rarely in the Piedmont. A number of neotropical migrant songbirds nest here, including Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*). Dusting areas of wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) were noted in 2002.

Several riffle areas are present in the stream, containing one of the county's most abundant mussel beds; one state-listed species of special concern is present, the notched rainbow (*Villosa constricta*). The Carolina darter (*Etheostoma collis*), a state-listed fish of special concern, has also been recorded from the pool habitat interspersed between the riffles. The presence of river otter (*Lutra canadensis*), a regionally rare species that requires healthy fish